MARVEL COMICS
WHAT IF...
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
HAD NOT MARRIED MARY JANE?
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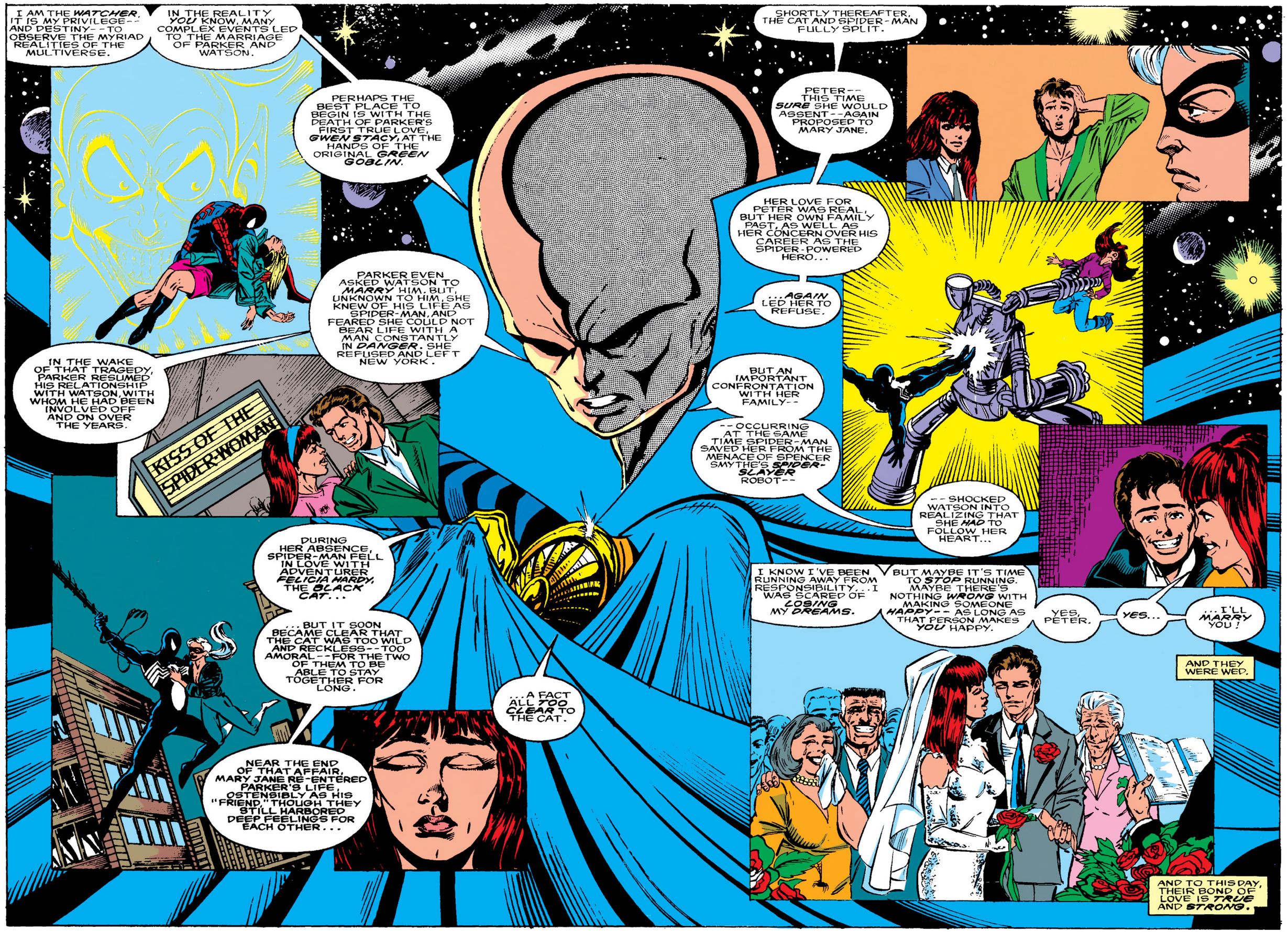
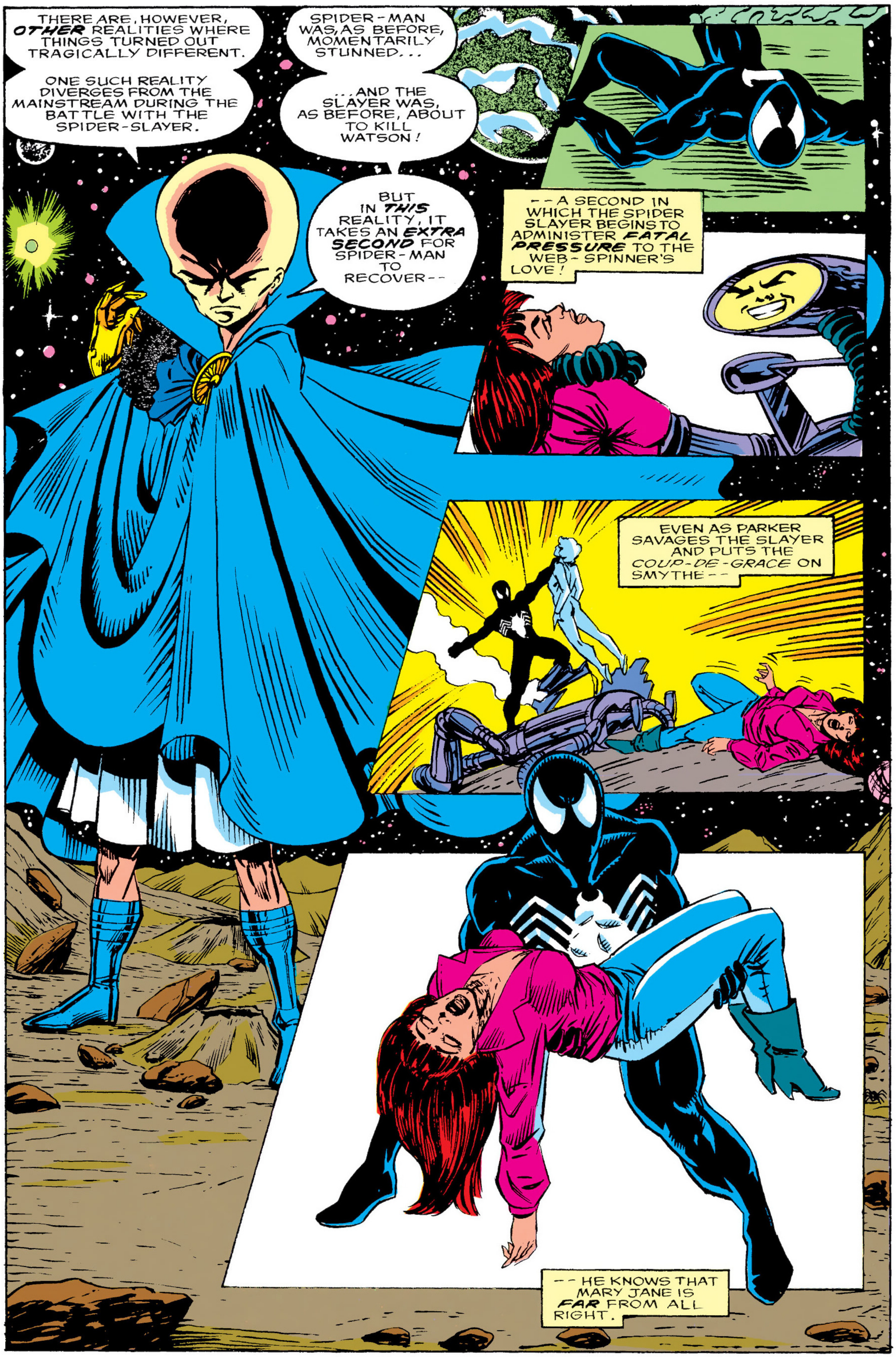
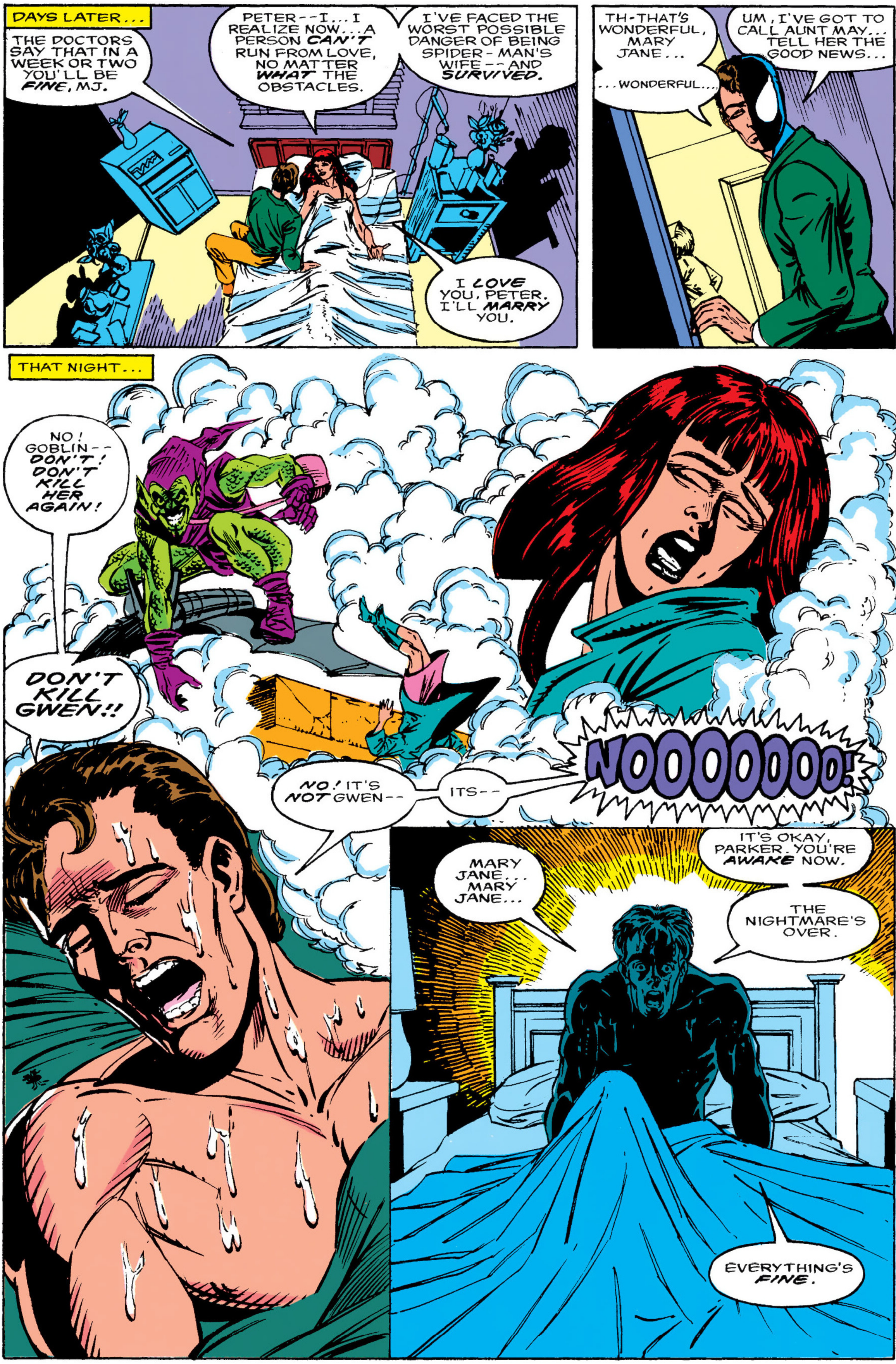
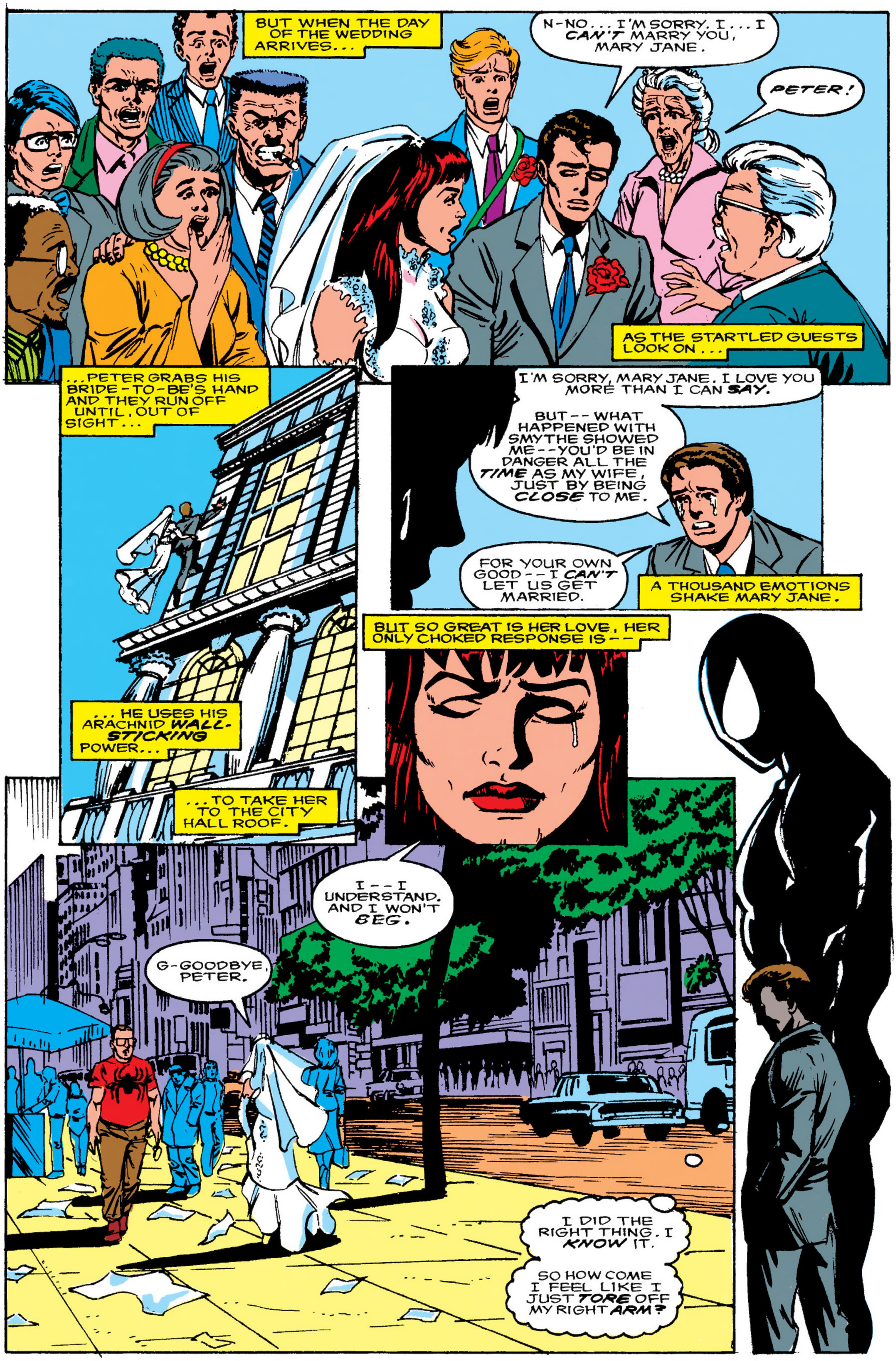
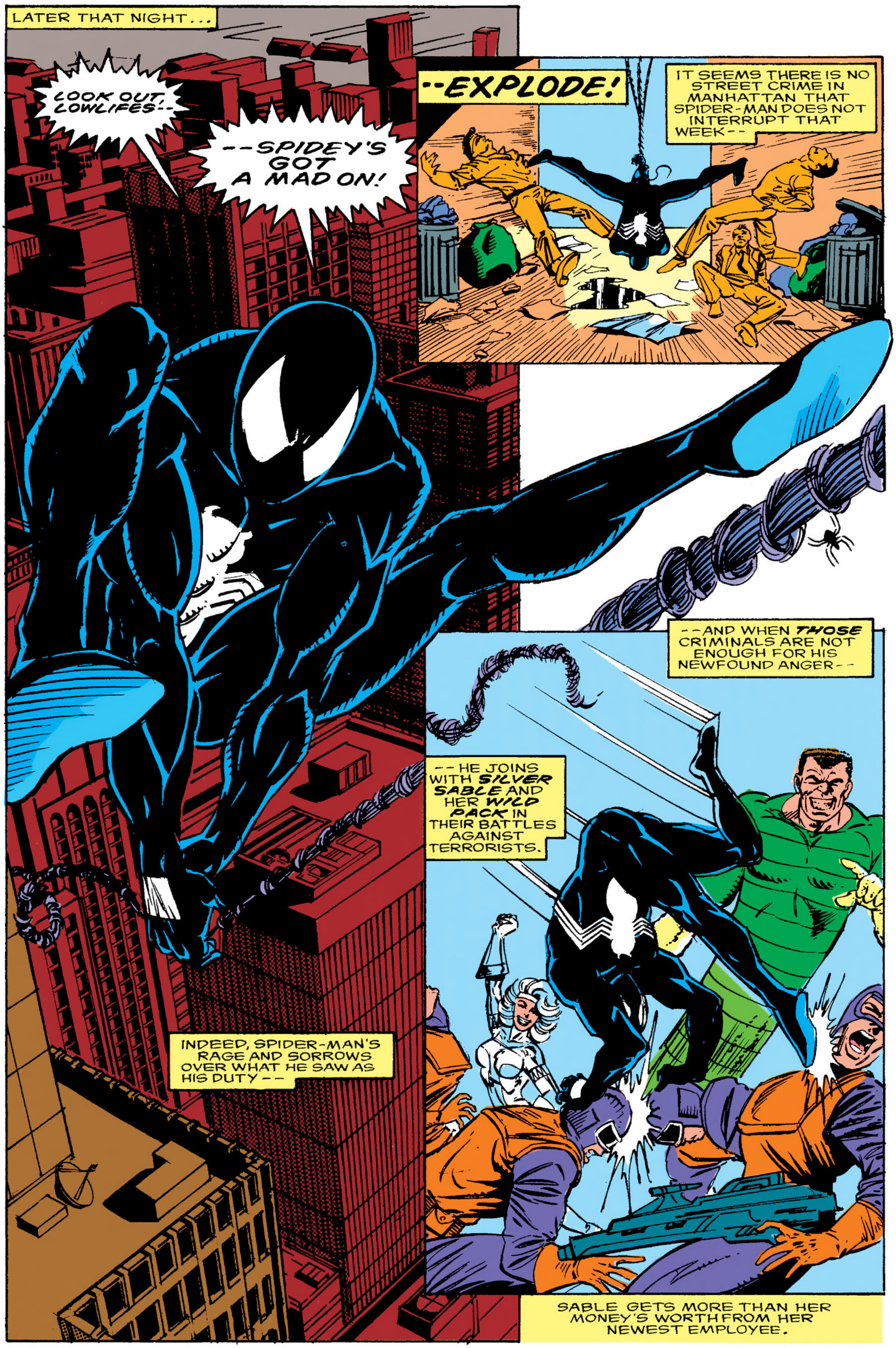
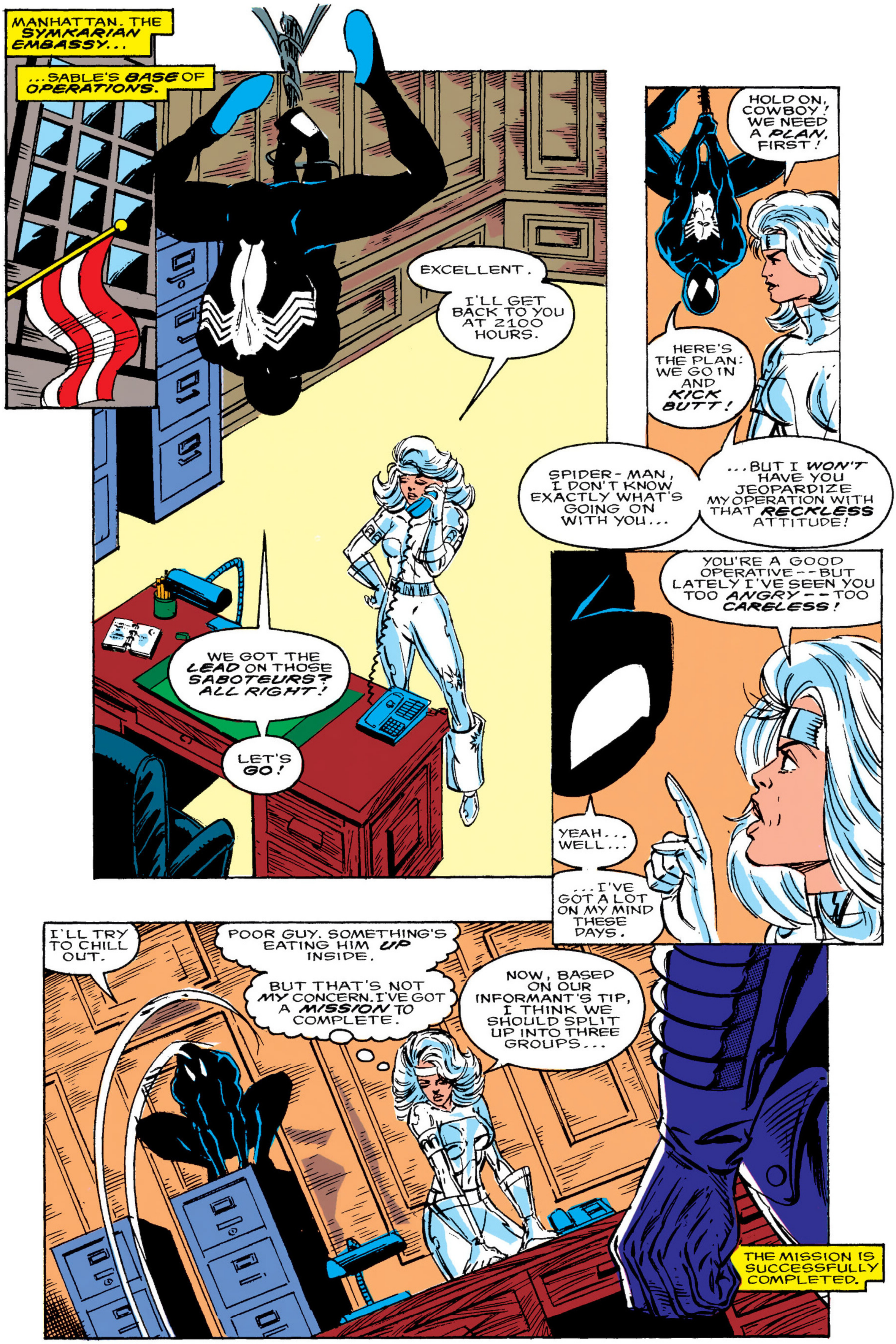

I AM THE WATCHER. IT IS MY PRIVILEGE--AND DESTINY--TO OBSERVE THE MYRIAD REALITIES OF THE MULTIVERSE.
IN THE REALITY YOU KNOW, MANY COMPLEX EVENTS LED TO THE MARRIAGE OF PARKER AND WATSON.
PERHAPS THE BEST PLACE TO BEGIN IS WITH THE DEATH OF PARKER'S FIRST TRUE LOVE, GWEN STACY, AT THE HANDS OF THE ORIGINAL GREEN GOBLIN.
PARKER EVEN ASKED WATSON TO MARRY HIM. BUT, UNKNOWN TO HIM, SHE KNEW OF HIS LIFE AS SPIDER-MAN, AND FEARED SHE COULD NOT BEAR LIFE WITH A MAN CONSTANTLY IN DANGER. SHE REFUSED AND LEFT NEW YORK.
IN THE WAKE OF THAT TRAGEDY, PARKER RESUMED HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH WATSON, WITH WHOM HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED OFF AND ON OVER THE YEARS.
KISS OF THE SPIDER-WOMAN
DURING HER ABSENCE, SPIDER-MAN FELL IN LOVE WITH ADVENTURER FELICIA HARDY, THE BLACK CAT...
...BUT IT SOON BECAME CLEAR THAT THE CAT WAS TOO WILD AND RECKLESS--TOO AMORAL--FOR THE TWO OF THEM TO BE ABLE TO STAY TOGETHER FOR LONG.
NEAR THE END OF THAT AFFAIR, MARY JANE RE-ENTERED PARKER'S LIFE, OSTENSIBLY AS HIS "FRIEND," THOUGH THEY STILL HARBORED DEEP FEELINGS FOR EACH OTHER...
...A FACT ALL TOO CLEAR TO THE CAT.
SHORTLY THEREAFTER, THE CAT AND SPIDER-MAN FULLY SPLIT.
PETER--THIS TIME SURE SHE WOULD ASSENT--AGAIN PROPOSED TO MARY JANE.
HER LOVE FOR PETER WAS REAL, BUT HER OWN FAMILY PAST, AS WELL AS HER CONCERN OVER HIS CAREER AS THE SPIDER-POWERED HERO...
...AGAIN LED HER TO REFUSE.
BUT AN IMPORTANT CONFRONTATION WITH HER FAMILY--
--OCCURRING AT THE SAME TIME SPIDER-MAN SAVED HER FROM THE MENACE OF SPENCER SMYTHE'S SPIDER-SLAYER ROBOT--
--SHOCKED WATSON INTO REALIZING THAT SHE HAD TO FOLLOW HER HEART...
I KNOW I'VE BEEN RUNNING AWAY FROM RESPONSIBILITY...I WAS SCARED OF LOSING MY DREAMS.
BUT MAYBE IT'S TIME TO STOP RUNNING. MAYBE THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MAKING SOMEONE HAPPY--AS LONG AS THAT PERSON MAKES YOU HAPPY.
YES, PETER.
YES...
...I'LL MARRY YOU!
AND THEY WERE WED.
AND TO THIS DAY, THEIR BOND OF LOVE IS TRUE AND STRONG.

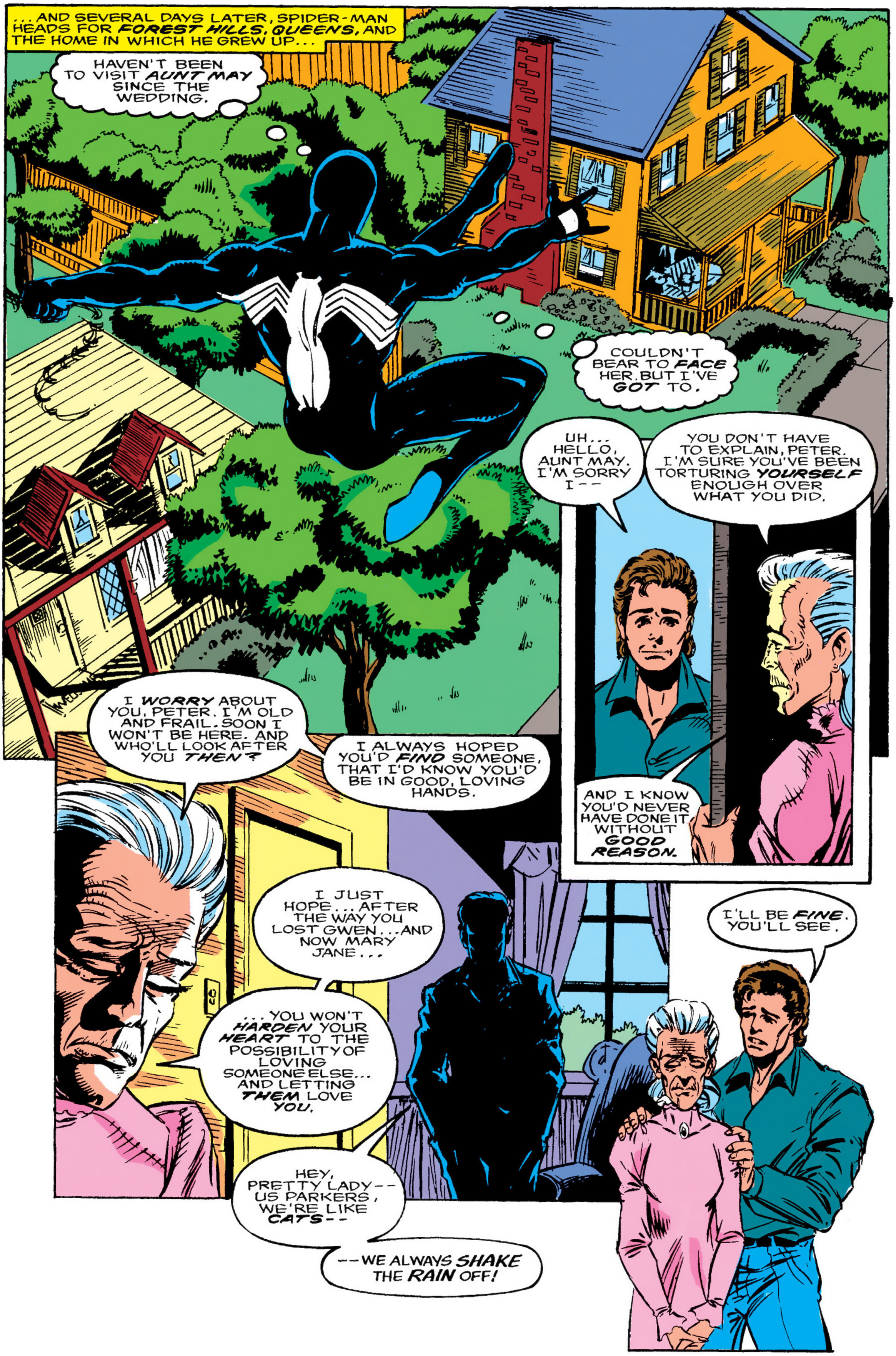

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, OTHER REALITIES WHERE THINGS TURNED OUT TRAGICALLY DIFFERENT.
ONE SUCH REALITY DIVERGES FROM THE MAINSTREAM DURING THE BATTLE WITH THE SPIDER-SLAYER.
SPIDER-MAN WAS, AS BEFORE, MOMENTARILY STUNNED...
...AND THE SLAYER WAS, AS BEFORE, ABOUT TO KILL WATSON!
BUT IN THIS REALITY, IT TAKES AN EXTRA SECOND FOR SPIDER-MAN TO RECOVER--
--A SECOND IN WHICH THE SPIDER SLAYER BEGINS TO ADMINISTER FATAL PRESSURE TO THE WEB-SPINNER'S LOVE!
EVEN AS PARKER SAVAGES THE SLAYER AND PUTS THE COUP-DE-GRACE ON SMYTHE--
--HE KNOWS THAT MARY JANE IS FAR FROM ALL RIGHT.

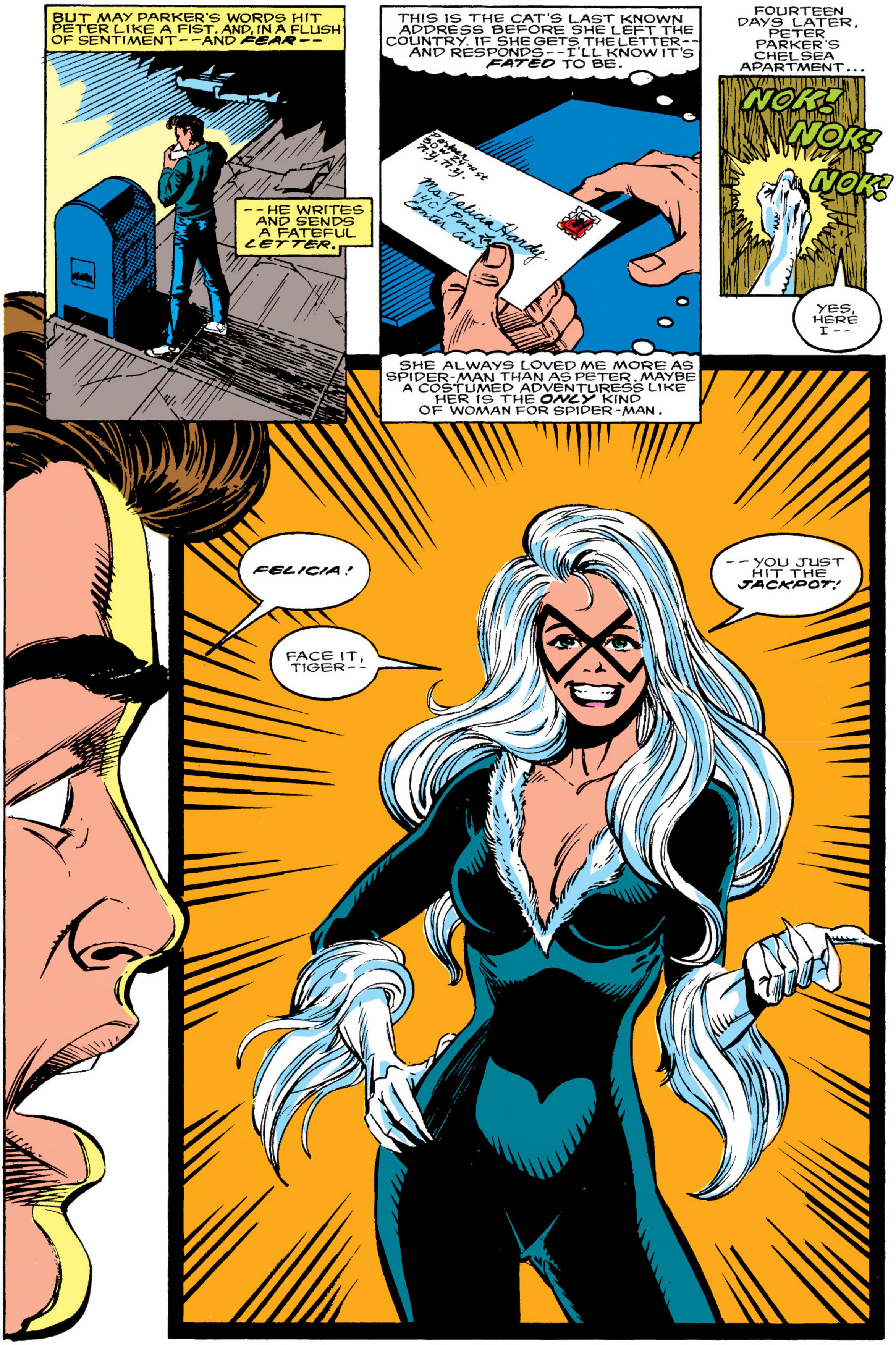

DAYS LATER...
THE DOCTORS SAY THAT IN A WEEK OR TWO YOU'LL BE FINE, MJ.
PETER--I...I REALIZE NOW...A PERSON CAN'T RUN FROM LOVE, NO MATTER WHAT THE OBSTACLES.
I'VE FACED THE WORST POSSIBLE DANGER OF BEING SPIDER-MAN'S WIFE--AND SURVIVED.
I LOVE YOU, PETER. I'LL MARRY YOU.
TH-THAT'S WONDERFUL, MARY JANE...
...WONDERFUL...
UM, I'VE GOT TO CALL AUNT MAY... TELL HER THE GOOD NEWS...
THAT NIGHT...
NO! GOBLIN-- DON'T! DON'T KILL HER AGAIN!
DON'T KILL GWEN!!
NOOOOOOO!
NO! IT'S NOT GWEN--
ITS--
MARY JANE... MARY JANE...
IT'S OKAY, PARKER. YOU'RE AWAKE NOW.
THE NIGHTMARE'S OVER.
EVERYTHING'S FINE.

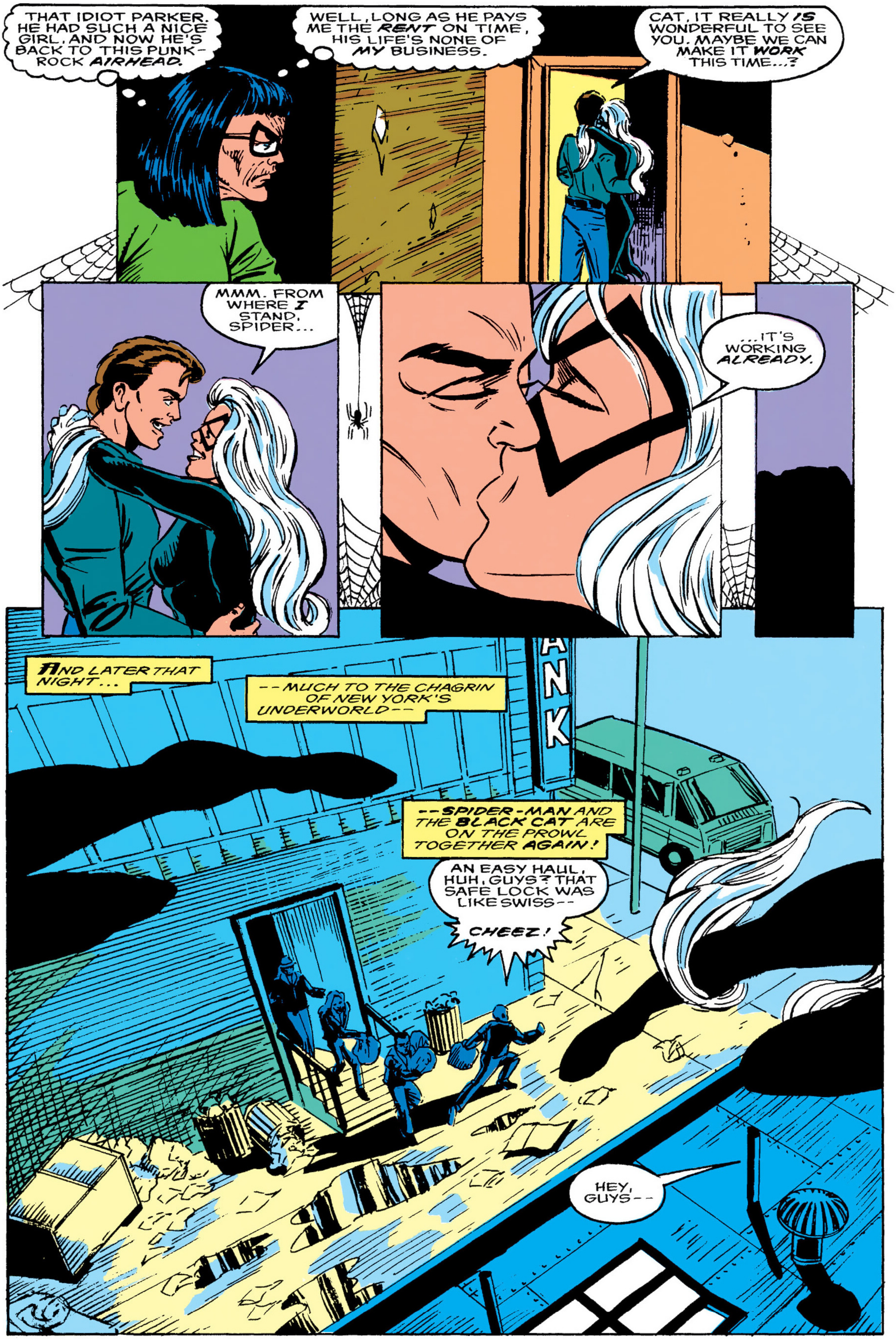

BUT WHEN THE DAY OF THE WEDDING ARRIVES...
N-NO... I'M SORRY. I... I CAN'T MARRY YOU, MARY JANE.
PETER!
AS THE STARTLED GUESTS LOOK ON...
...PETER GRABS HIS BRIDE-TO-BE'S HAND AND THEY RUN OFF UNTIL, OUT OF SIGHT...
I'M SORRY, MARY JANE. I LOVE YOU MORE THAN I CAN SAY.
BUT -- WHAT HAPPENED WITH SMYTHE SHOWED ME -- YOU'D BE IN DANGER ALL THE TIME AS MY WIFE, JUST BY BEING CLOSE TO ME.
FOR YOUR OWN GOOD -- I CAN'T LET US GET MARRIED.
A THOUSAND EMOTIONS SHAKE MARY JANE.
BUT SO GREAT IS HER LOVE, HER ONLY CHOKED RESPONSE IS --
...HE USES HIS ARACHNID WALL-STICKING POWER...
...TO TAKE HER TO THE CITY HALL ROOF.
I -- I UNDERSTAND. AND I WON'T BEG.
G-GOODBYE, PETER.
I DID THE RIGHT THING. I KNOW IT.
SO HOW COME I FEEL LIKE I JUST TORE OFF MY RIGHT ARM?


LATER THAT NIGHT...
COOK OUT, LOWLIFES--
--SPIDEY'S GOT A MAD ON!
--EXPLODE!
IT SEEMS THERE IS NO STREET CRIME IN MANHATTAN THAT SPIDER-MAN DOES NOT INTERRUPT THAT WEEK--
--AND WHEN THOSE CRIMINALS ARE NOT ENOUGH FOR HIS NEWFOUND ANGER--
--HE JOINS WITH SILVER SABLE AND HER WILD PACK IN THEIR BATTLES AGAINST TERRORISTS.
INDEED, SPIDER-MAN'S RAGE AND SORROWS OVER WHAT HE SAW AS HIS DUTY--
SABLE GETS MORE THAN HER MONEY'S WORTH FROM HER NEWEST EMPLOYEE.

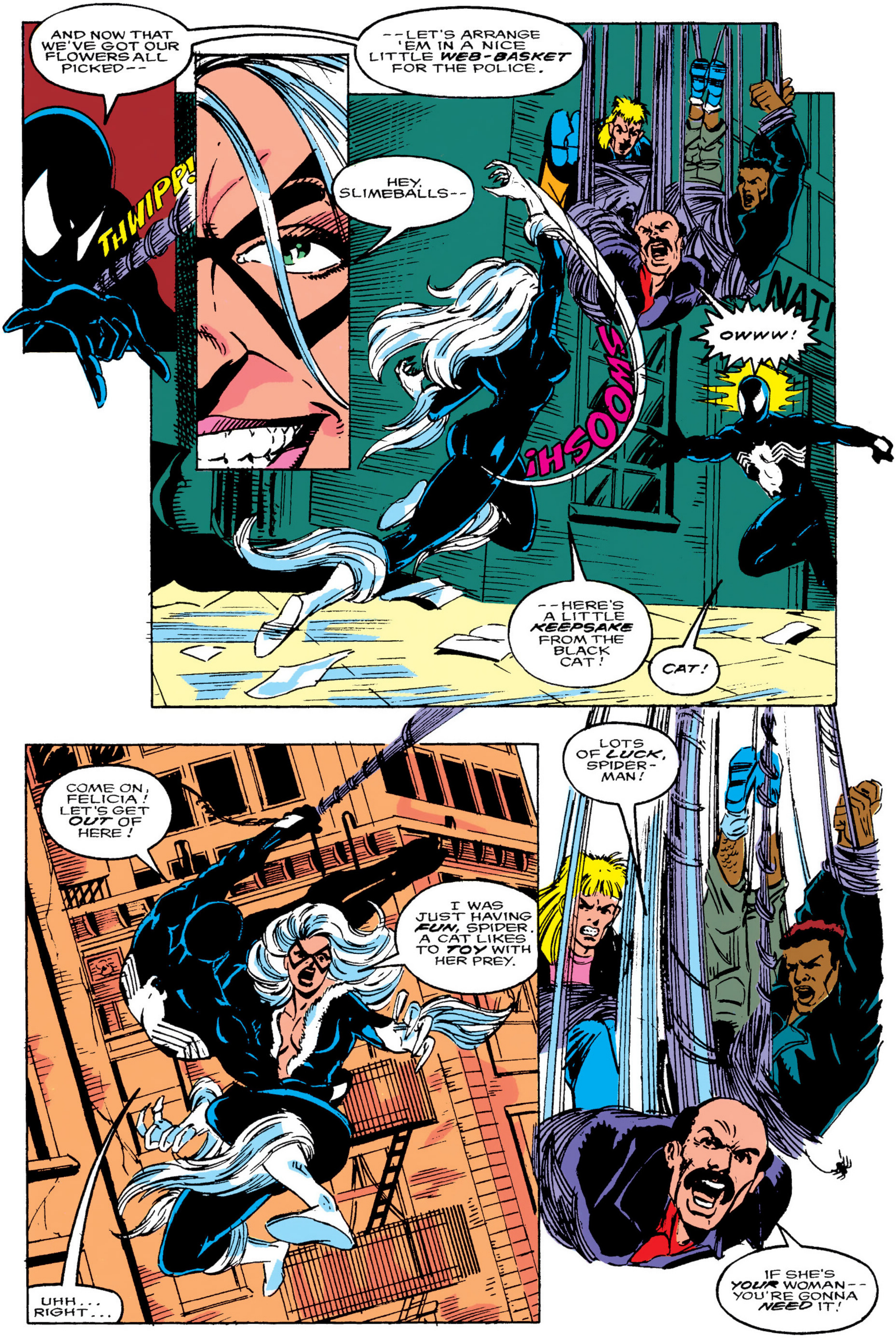

MANHATTAN. THE SYMKARIAN EMBASSY...
...SABLE'S BASE OF OPERATIONS.
EXCELLENT.
I'LL GET BACK TO YOU AT 2100 HOURS.
WE GOT THE LEAD ON THOSE SABOTEURS? ALL RIGHT!
LET'S GO!
HOLD ON, COWBOY! WE NEED A PLAN, FIRST!
HERE'S THE PLAN: WE GO IN AND KICK BUTT!
SPIDER-MAN, I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU...
...BUT I WON'T HAVE YOU JEOPARDIZE MY OPERATION WITH THAT RECKLESS ATTITUDE!
YOU'RE A GOOD OPERATIVE--BUT LATELY I'VE SEEN YOU TOO ANGRY--TOO CARELESS!
YEAH... WELL...
...I'VE GOT A LOT ON MY MIND THESE DAYS.
I'LL TRY TO CHILL OUT.
POOR GUY. SOMETHING'S EATING HIM UP INSIDE.
BUT THAT'S NOT MY CONCERN. I'VE GOT A MISSION TO COMPLETE.
NOW, BASED ON OUR INFORMANT'S TIP, I THINK WE SHOULD SPLIT UP INTO THREE GROUPS...
THE MISSION IS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED.

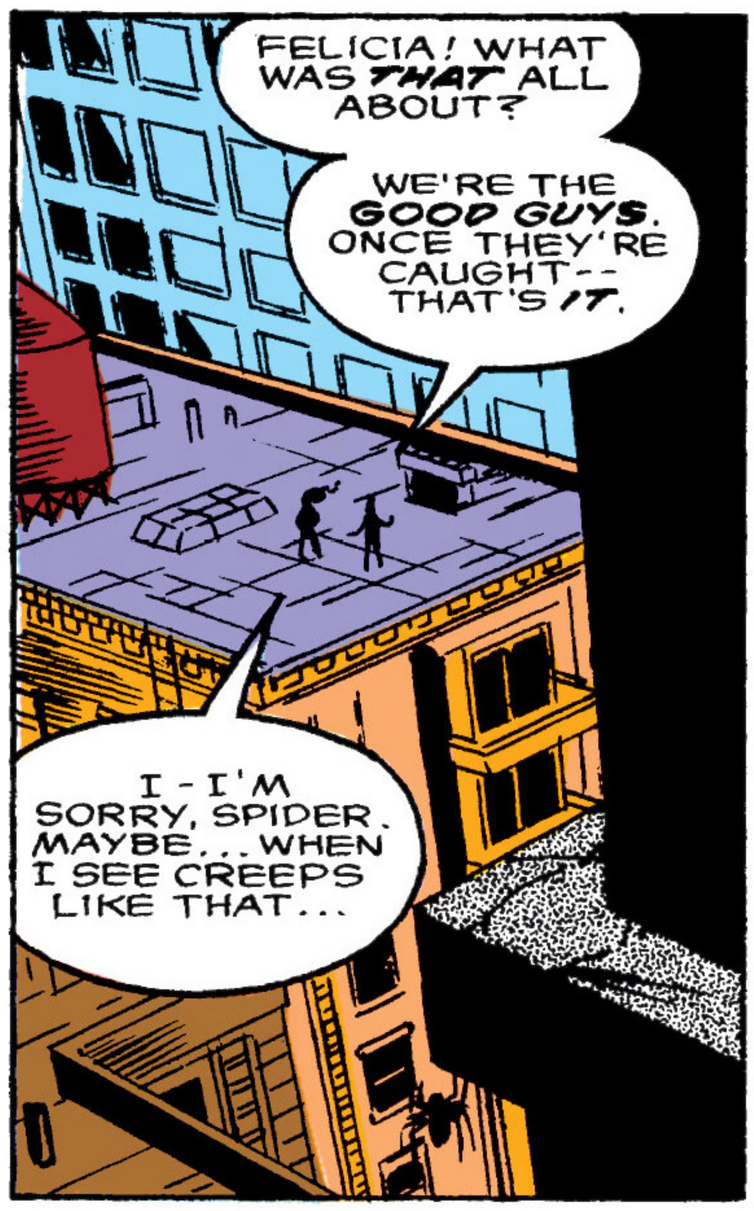

...AND SEVERAL DAYS LATER, SPIDER-MAN HEADS FOR FOREST HILLS, QUEENS, AND THE HOME IN WHICH HE GREW UP...
HAVEN'T BEEN TO VISIT AUNT MAY SINCE THE WEDDING.
COULDN'T BEAR TO FACE HER. BUT I'VE GOT TO.
UH... HELLO, AUNT MAY. I'M SORRY I--
YOU DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN, PETER. I'M SURE YOU'VE BEEN TORTURING YOURSELF ENOUGH OVER WHAT YOU DID.
AND I KNOW YOU'D NEVER HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT GOOD REASON.
I WORRY ABOUT YOU, PETER. I'M OLD AND FRAIL. SOON I WON'T BE HERE. AND WHO'LL LOOK AFTER YOU THEN?
I ALWAYS HOPED YOU'D FIND SOMEONE, THAT I'D KNOW YOU'D BE IN GOOD, LOVING HANDS.
I JUST HOPE... AFTER THE WAY YOU LOST GWEN...AND NOW MARY JANE...
...YOU WON'T HARDEN YOUR HEART TO THE POSSIBILITY OF LOVING SOMEONE ELSE... AND LETTING THEM LOVE YOU.
I'LL BE FINE. YOU'LL SEE.
HEY, PRETTY LADY-- US PARKERS, WE'RE LIKE CATS--
--WE ALWAYS SHAKE THE RAIN OFF!

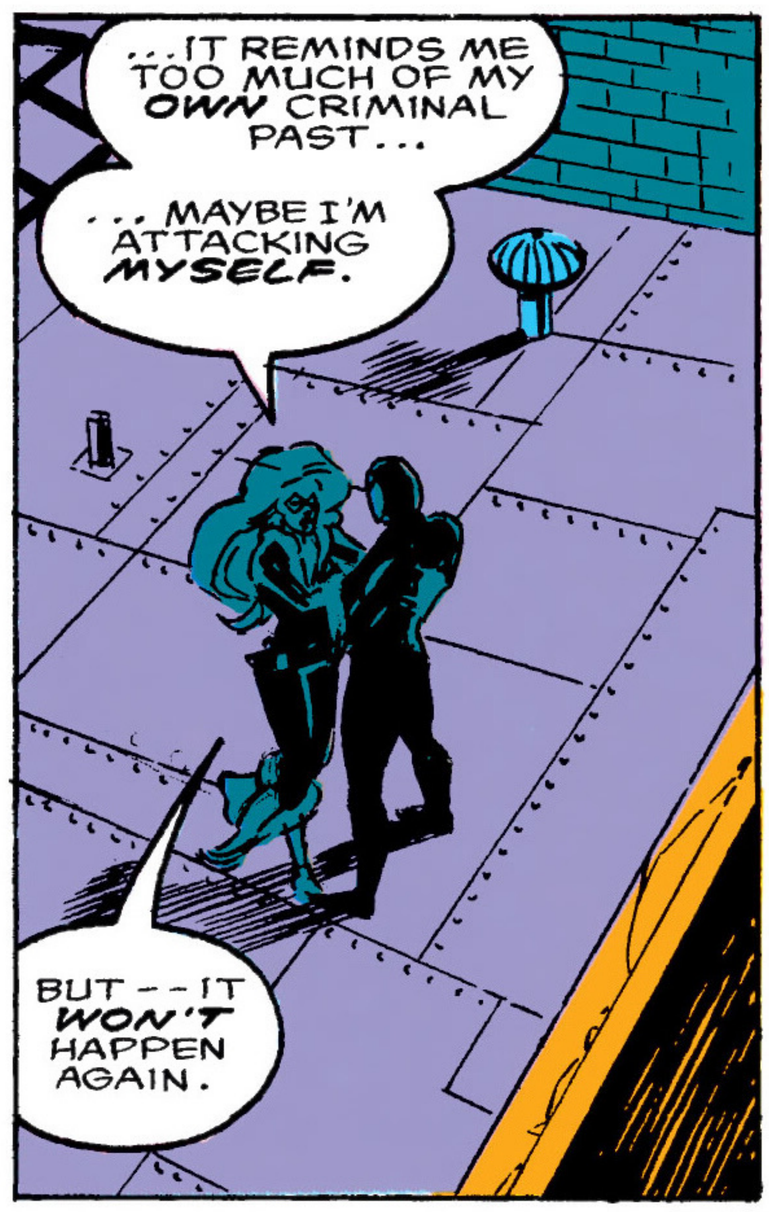

BUT MAY PARKER'S WORDS HIT PETER LIKE A FIST. AND, IN A FLUSH OF SENTIMENT--AND FEAR--
--HE WRITES AND SENDS A FATEFUL LETTER.
THIS IS THE CAT'S LAST KNOWN ADDRESS BEFORE SHE LEFT THE COUNTRY. IF SHE GETS THE LETTER--AND RESPONDS--I'LL KNOW IT'S FATED TO BE.
Ms. Felicia Hardy
FOURTEEN DAYS LATER, PETER PARKER'S CHELSEA APARTMENT...
NOK! NOK! NOK!
YES, HERE I--
SHE ALWAYS LOVED ME MORE AS SPIDER-MAN THAN AS PETER. MAYBE A COSTUMED ADVENTURESS LIKE HER IS THE ONLY KIND OF WOMAN FOR SPIDER-MAN.
FELICIA!
FACE IT, TIGER--
--YOU JUST HIT THE JACKPOT!

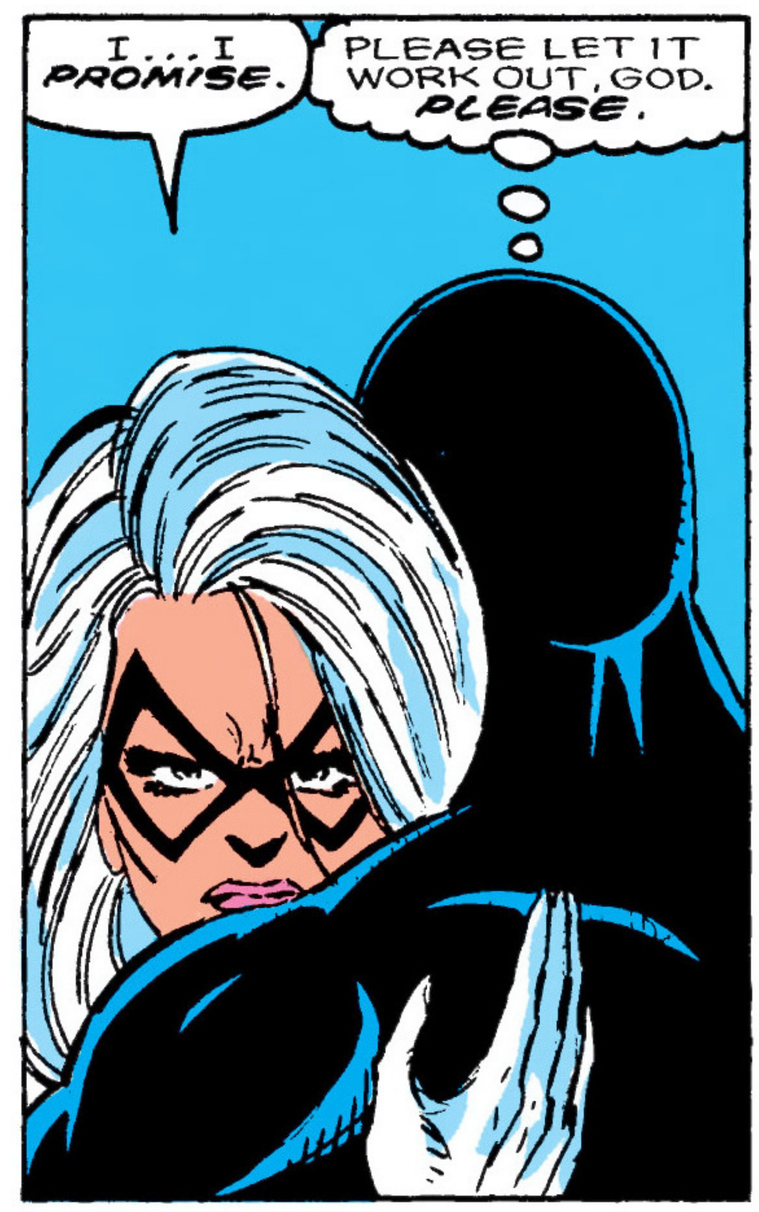

THAT IDIOT PARKER. HE HAD SUCH A NICE GIRL, AND NOW HE'S BACK TO THIS PUNK-ROCK AIRHEAD.
WELL, LONG AS HE PAYS ME THE RENT ON TIME, HIS LIFE'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS.
CAT, IT REALLY IS WONDERFUL TO SEE YOU. MAYBE WE CAN MAKE IT WORK THIS TIME...?
MMM. FROM WHERE I STAND, SPIDER...
...IT'S WORKING ALREADY.
AND LATER THAT NIGHT...
--MUCH TO THE CHAGRIN OF NEW YORK'S UNDERWORLD--
--SPIDER-MAN AND THE BLACK CAT ARE ON THE PROWL TOGETHER AGAIN!
AN EASY HAUL, HUH, GUYS? THAT SAFE LOCK WAS LIKE SWISS--
CHEEZ!
HEY, GUYS--

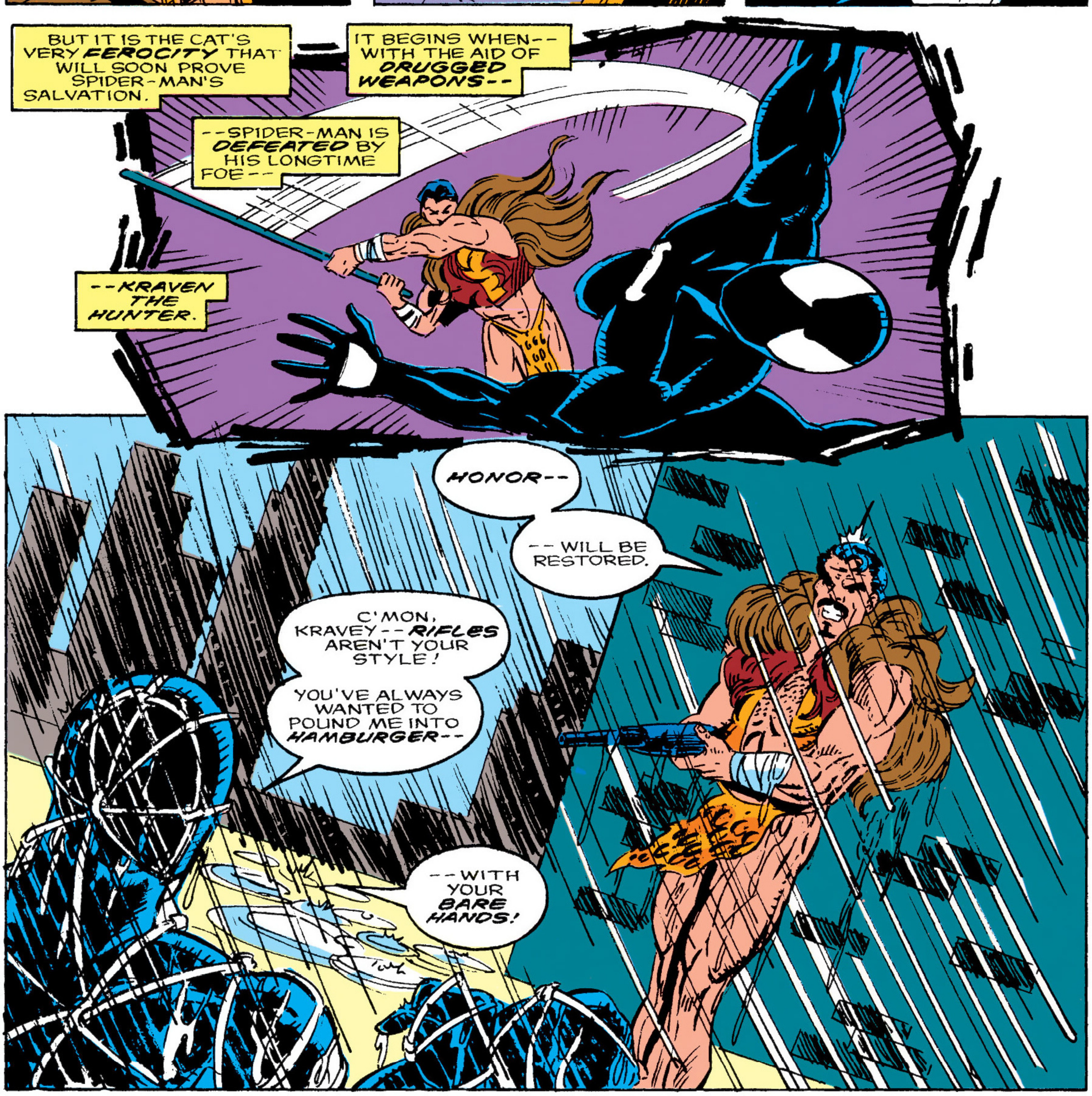
--WOULDN'T IT BE EASIER TO CARRY CREDIT CARDS?
CAT--TAKE THAT CREEP--
WOK!
WHAK!
--WHILE I HANDLE ONE SMART GUY--
--WHO THINKS--
--HE'S TOO SLICK--
--FOR THE APPLE'S HOTTEST CRIME-BUSTING DUO!
I--
I--
BOK!
HE'S WRONG!

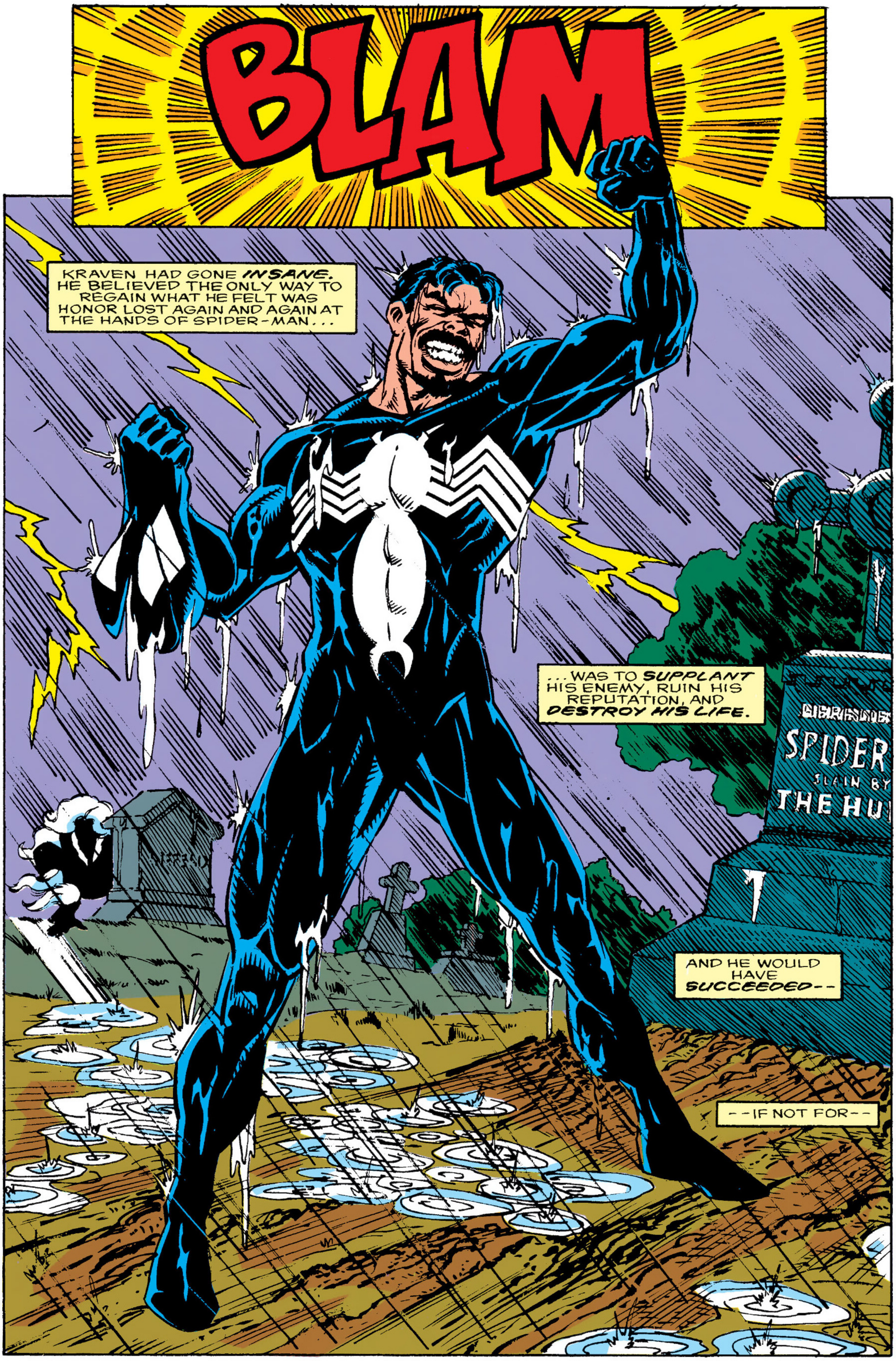

AND NOW THAT WE'VE GOT OUR FLOWERS ALL PICKED--
THWIPP!
--LET'S ARRANGE 'EM IN A NICE LITTLE WEB-BASKET FOR THE POLICE.
HEY, SLIMEBALLS--
SWOOSH!
OWWW!
--HERE'S A LITTLE KEEPSAKE FROM THE BLACK CAT!
CAT!
COME ON, FELICIA! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
I WAS JUST HAVING FUN, SPIDER. A CAT LIKES TO TOY WITH HER PREY.
UHH... RIGHT...
LOTS OF LUCK, SPIDER-MAN!
IF SHE'S YOUR WOMAN-- YOU'RE GONNA NEED IT!


FELICIA! WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
WE'RE THE GOOD GUYS. ONCE THEY'RE CAUGHT-- THAT'S IT.
I-I'M SORRY, SPIDER. MAYBE... WHEN I SEE CREEPS LIKE THAT...

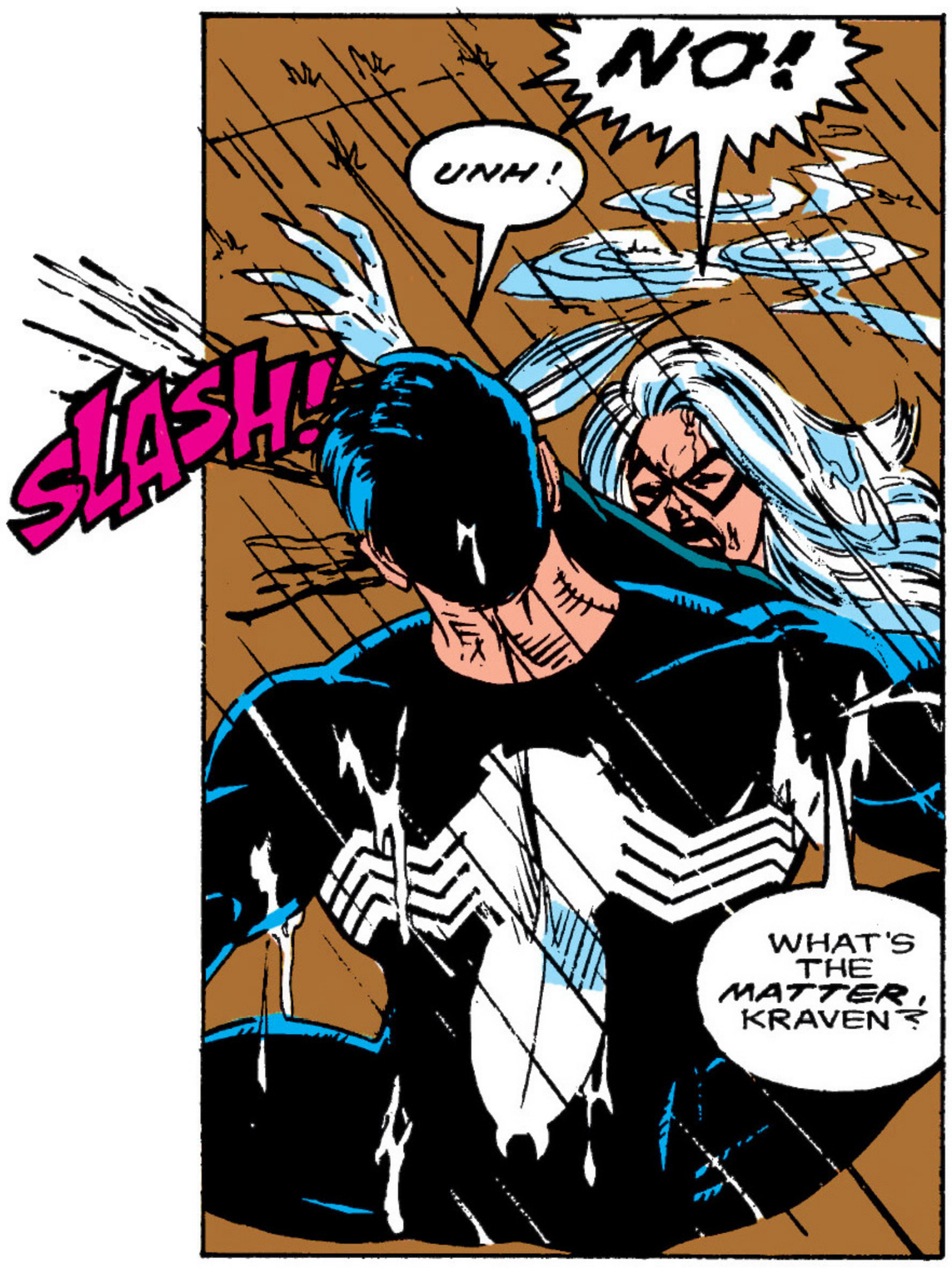

...IT REMINDS ME TOO MUCH OF MY OWN CRIMINAL PAST...
...MAYBE I'M ATTACKING MYSELF.
BUT--IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.


I...I PROMISE.
PLEASE LET IT WORK OUT, GOD. PLEASE.


BUT IT IS THE CAT'S VERY FEROCITY THAT WILL SOON PROVE SPIDER-MAN'S SALVATION.
IT BEGINS WHEN-- WITH THE AID OF DRUGGED WEAPONS--
--SPIDER-MAN IS DEFEATED BY HIS LONGTIME FOE--
--KRAVEN THE HUNTER.
HONOR--
--WILL BE RESTORED.
C'MON, KRAVEY--RIFLES AREN'T YOUR STYLE!
YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO POUND ME INTO HAMBURGER--
--WITH YOUR BARE HANDS!

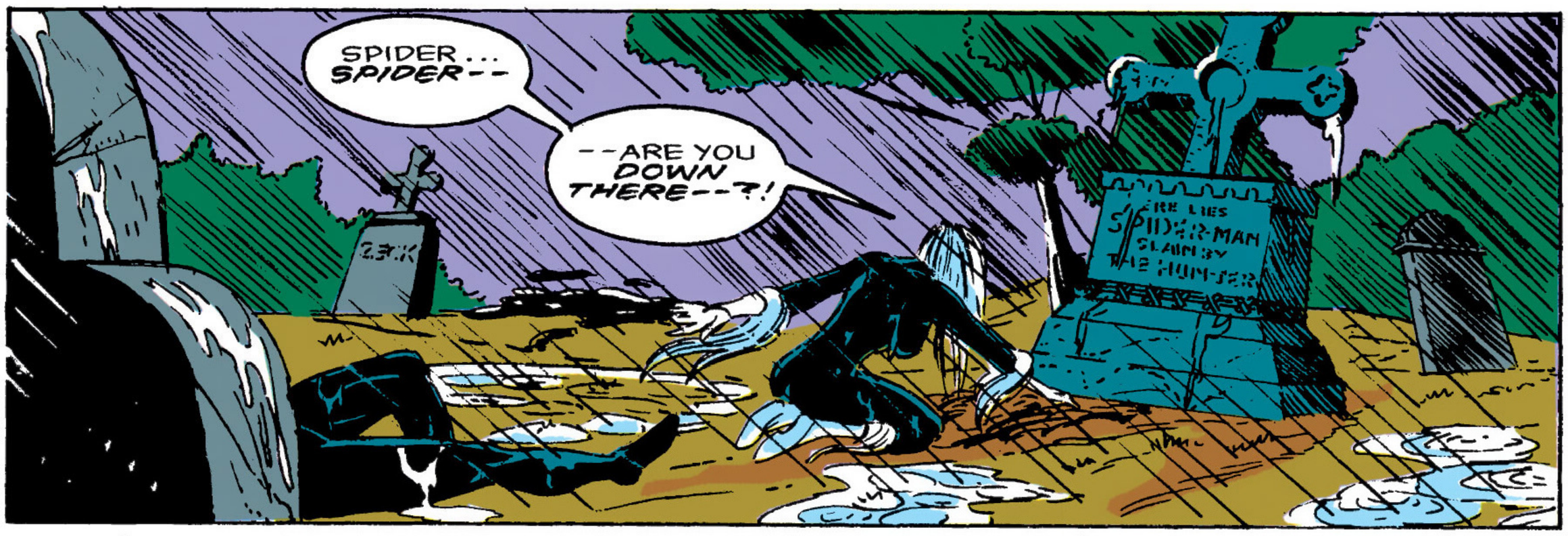

BLAM
KRAVEN HAD GONE INSANE. HE BELIEVED THE ONLY WAY TO REGAIN WHAT HE FELT WAS HONOR LOST AGAIN AND AGAIN AT THE HANDS OF SPIDER-MAN...
...WAS TO SUPPLANT HIS ENEMY, RUIN HIS REPUTATION, AND DESTROY HIS LIFE.
SPIDER
AND HE WOULD HAVE SUCCEEDED--
--IF NOT FOR--

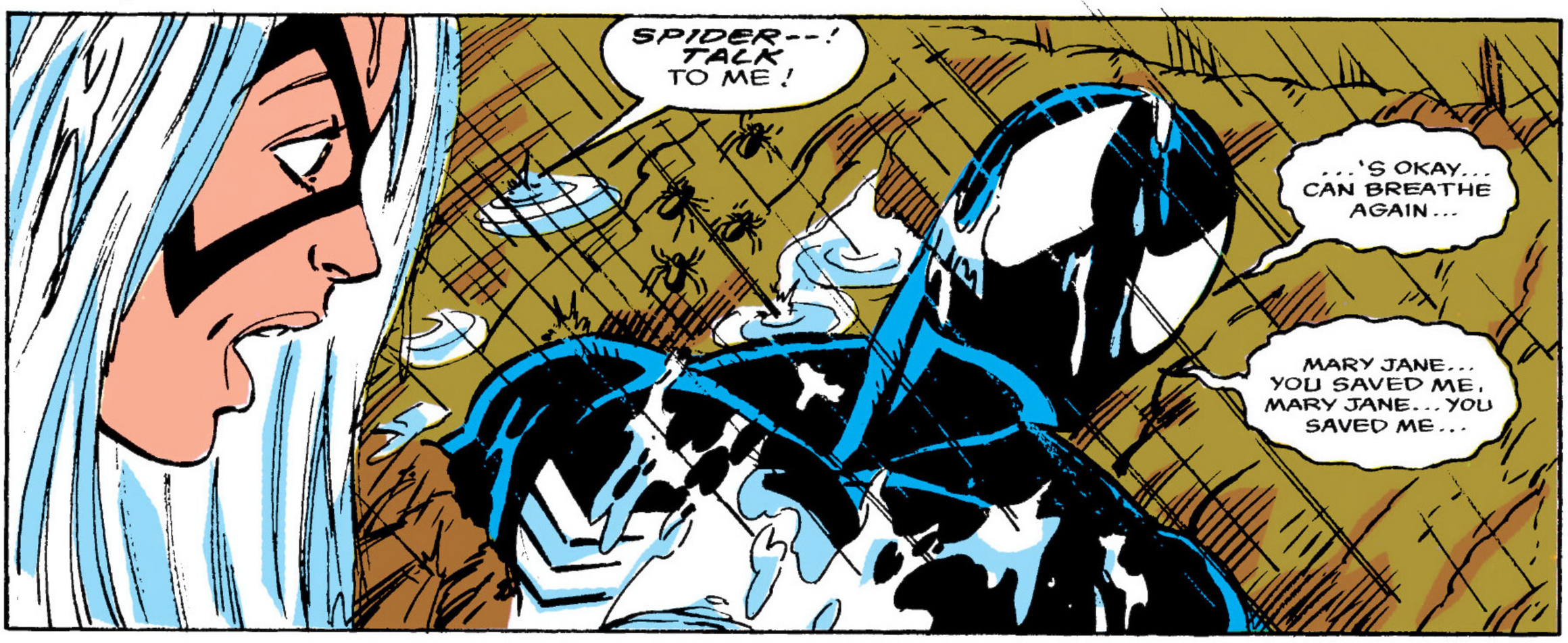
WHERE IS HE?!
BRAM!
AAGH!
HE'S SIX FEET BELOW US--
SWOK!
--WHERE YOU, FOOL--
WAM!
--SHALL SOON JOIN HIM!
N-NO-- NO--

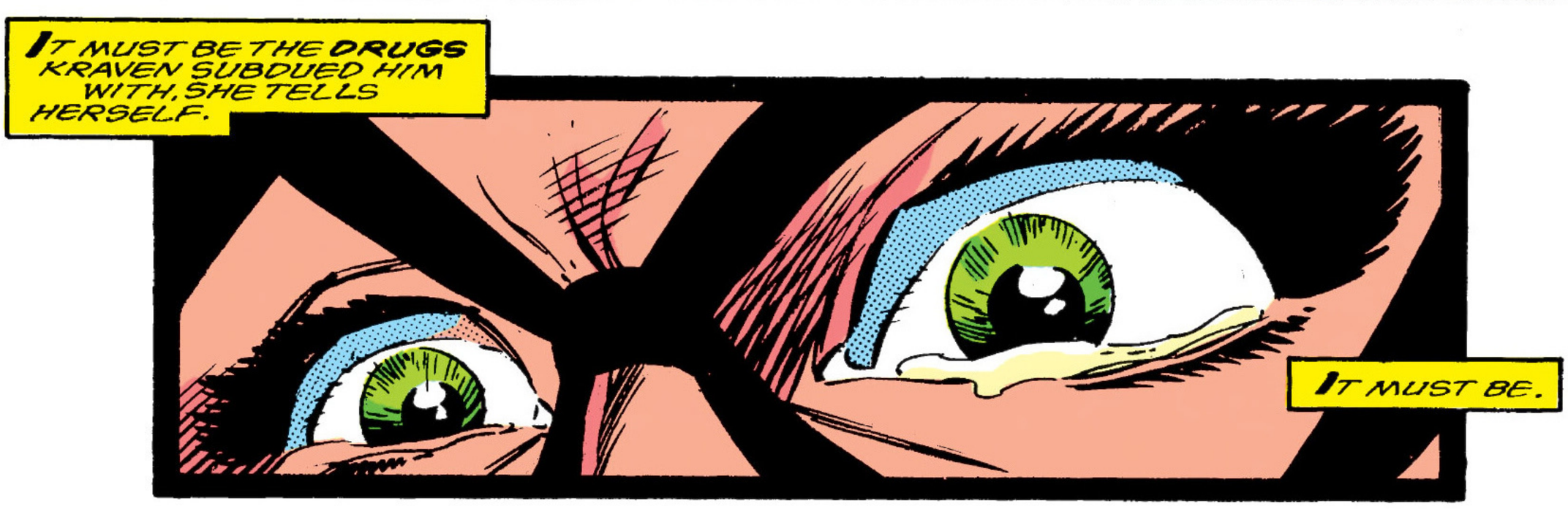

NO!
UNH!
SLASH!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, KRAVEN?

WHOK!
CURARE ON MY CLAWS--
--TOO MUCH FOR THE BIG BAD HUNTER?

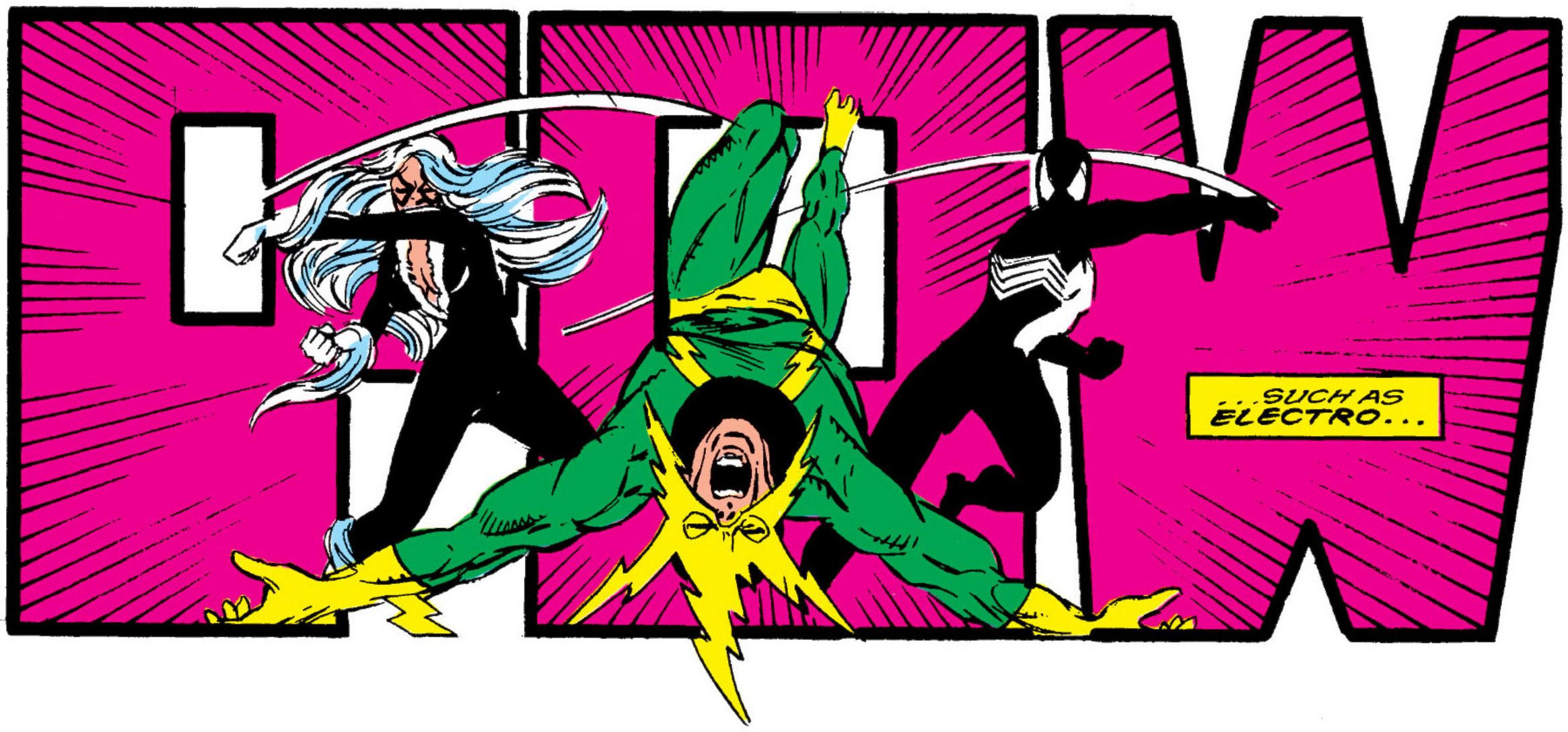
HSSSSS




WITH PETER SOON RECOVERED FROM KRAVEN'S ATTACK, HE AND THE CAT TAKE DOWN AN ARRAY OF **COSTUMED VILLAINS**...



...AND THE VILLAINOUS COSTUME, VENOM!
A SYMBIOTIC COMBINATION OF AN ALIEN ENTITY AND A HUMAN WHO BOTH HATE SPIDER-MAN, VENOM COMES CLOSE TO DEFEATING HIS NEMESIS --
--UNTIL--
PYONNGG!
AAGGHH!
SONIC BLAST--! I FELT THAT!
NOW GIVE ME THAT WEAPON BEFORE YOU ANGER ME FURTHER.
VENOM--
--YOU'RE NOT WORTH THE EFFORT OF A WISECRACK.
PYONNGG!
AAAAAAAA!

GEE... LOOKS LIKE ONE MORE BLAST...
...AND YOU'LL JUST BE A NASTY MEMORY...!
G-GO AHEAD-- GET IT OVER WITH--
CAT-- NO!
THWIPP!
HE'S DEFEATED. WE DON'T HAVE TO KILL HIM!
BUT--HE'D DO THE SAME TO US! HE WAS TRYING TO!
THAT'S THE POINT. WE CAN'T DESCEND TO HIS LEVEL.
-SIGH- I'M AMAZED YOU'VE LIVED THIS LONG, SPIDER.
BUT-- OKAY.
STOMP!
OWW!
OH-- SO SORRY, EDDIE.

FINAL **DAILY BUGLE** FINAL

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

25¢ THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 1990 SUNNY, WARM - PG.55

# THE SPIDER AND THE CAT

by CLAR

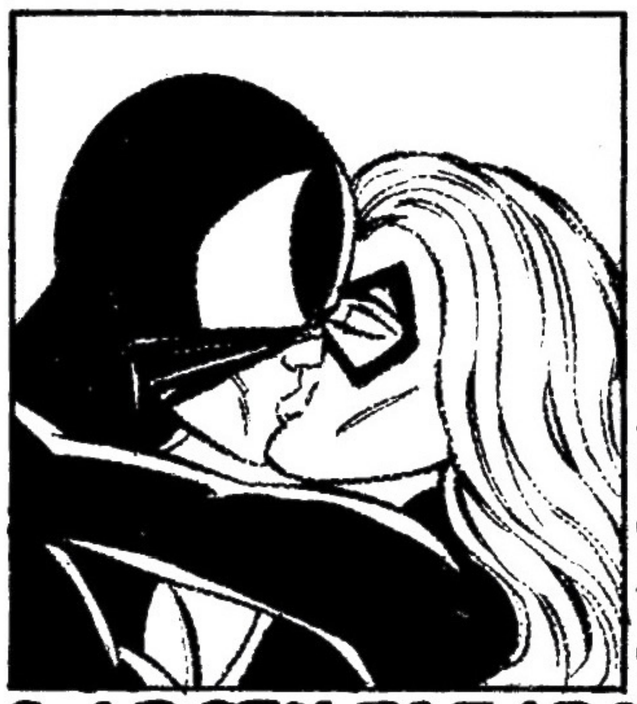
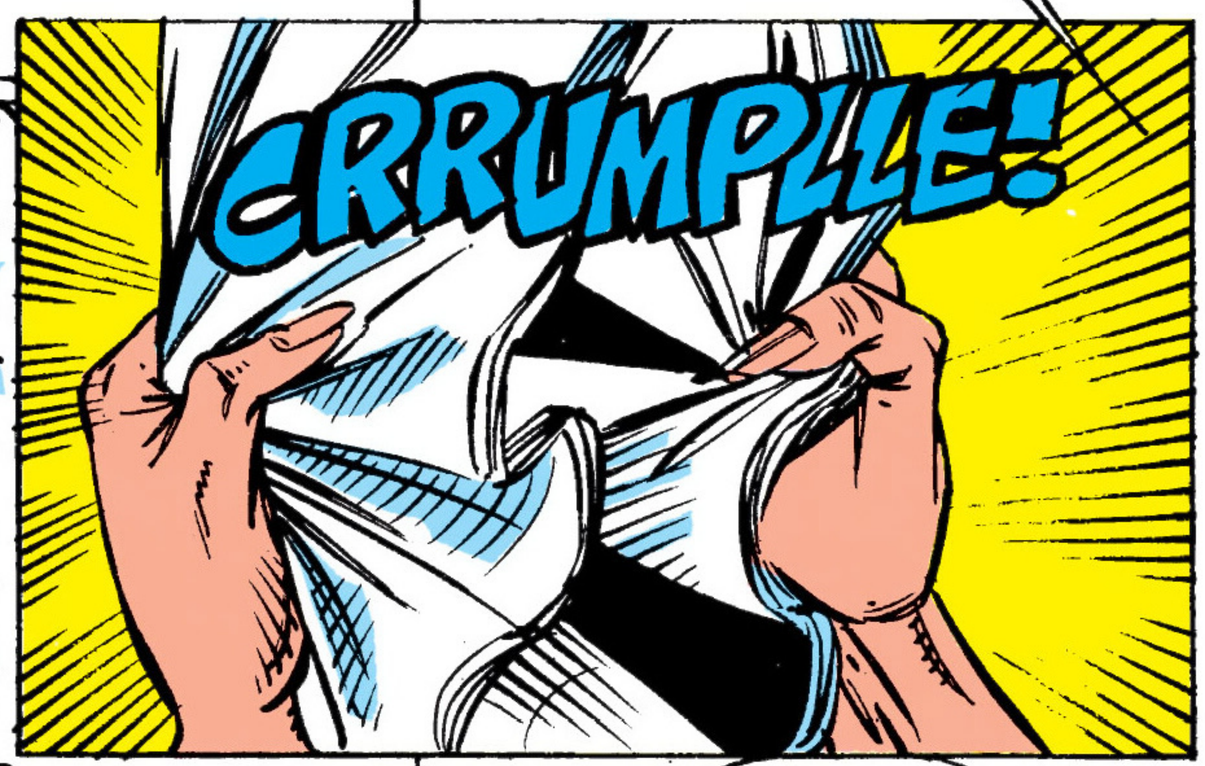
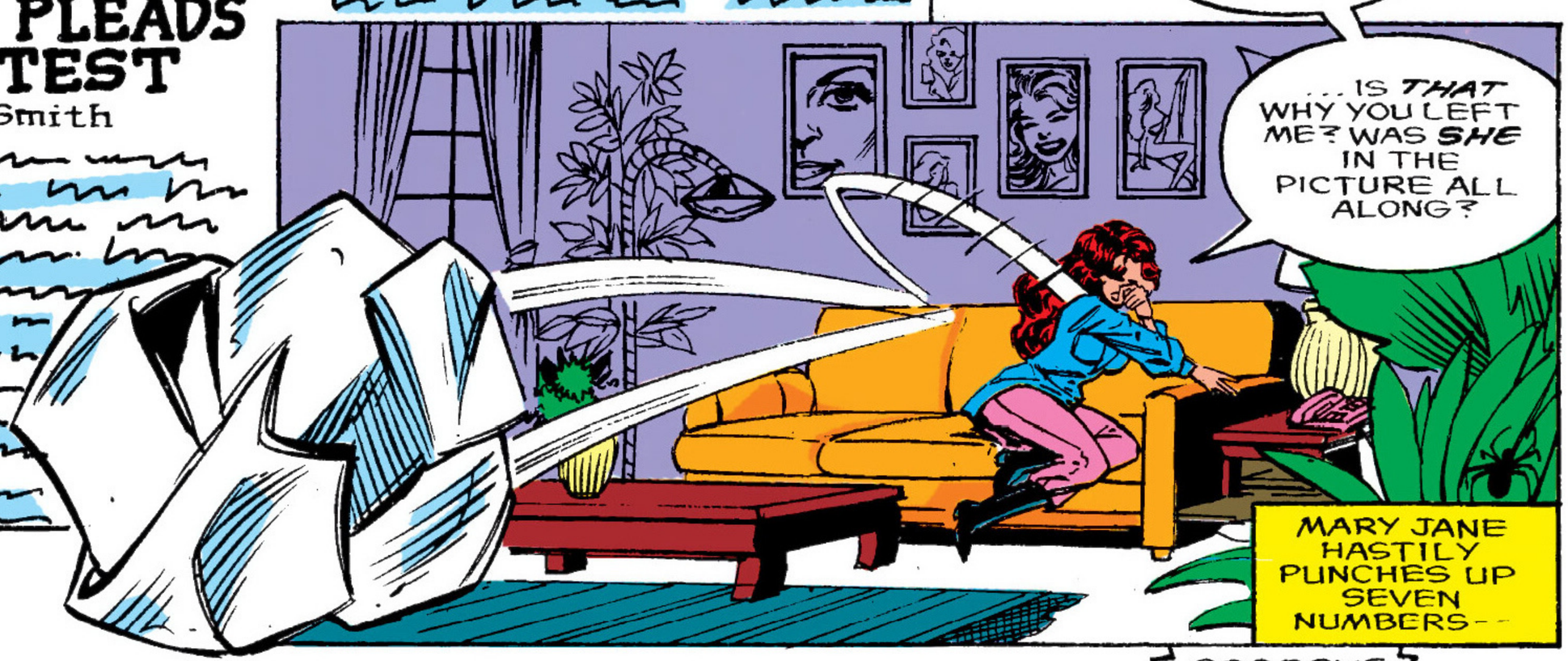


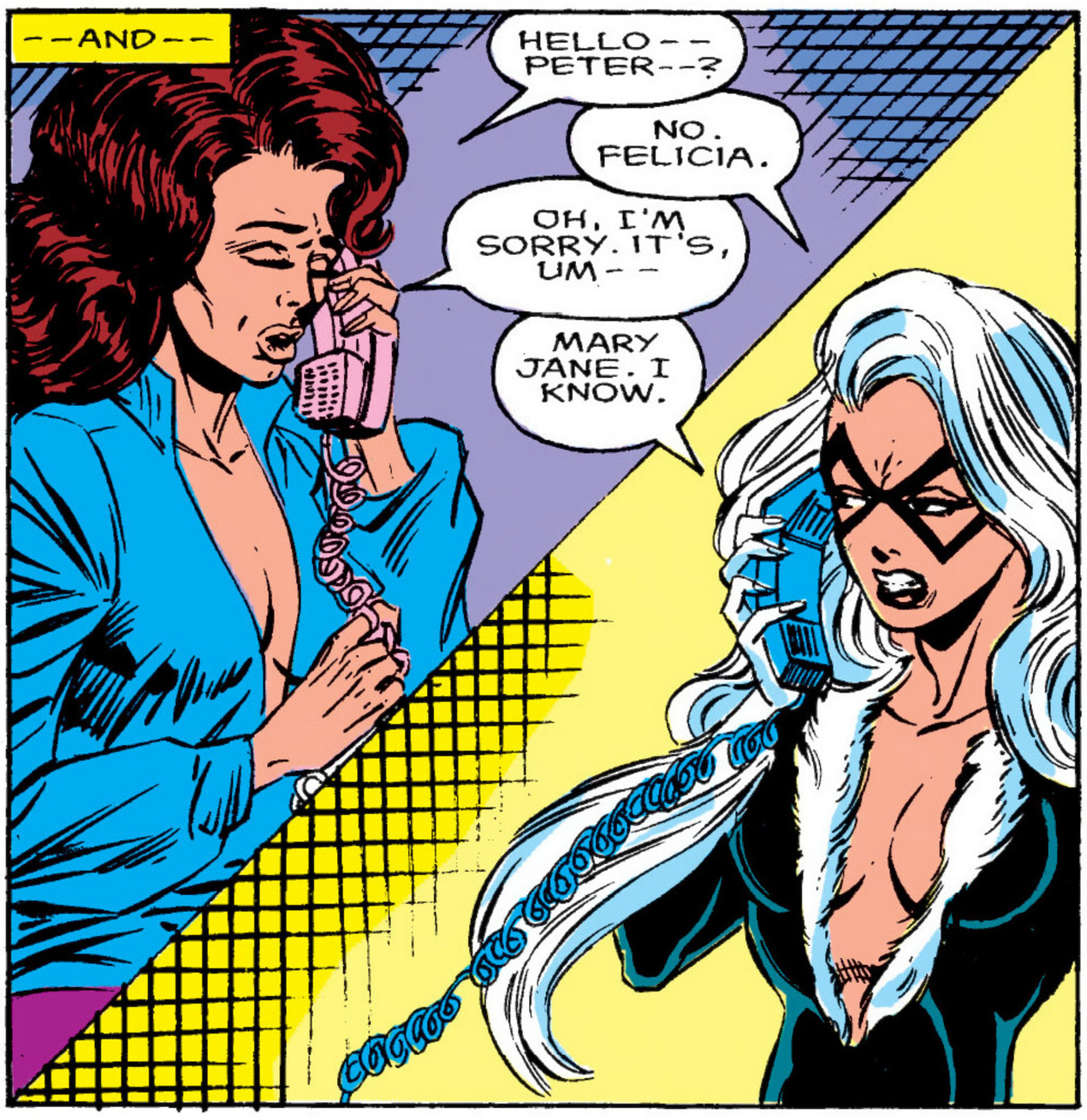
photo by Nick Katzenberg

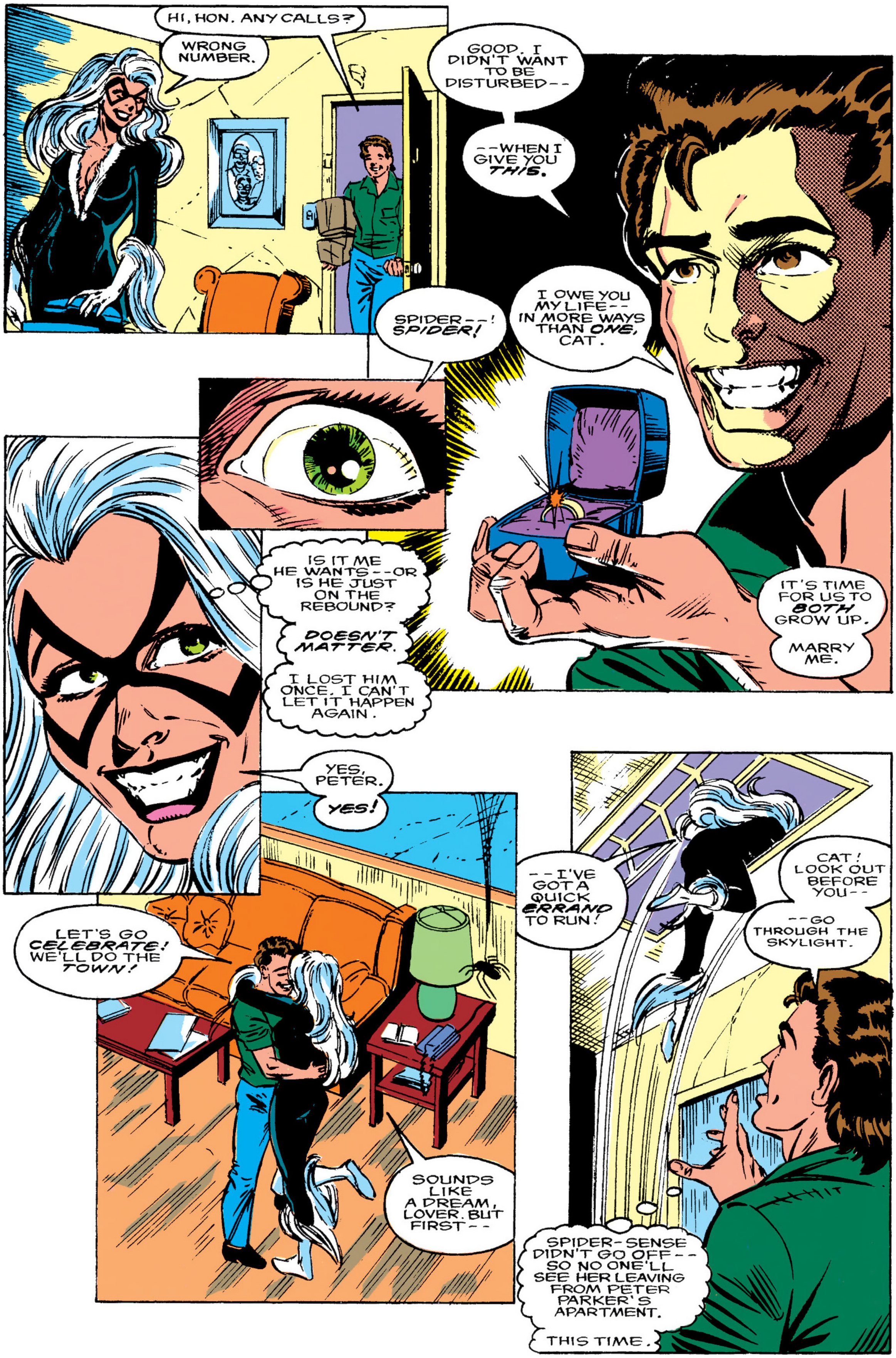
## LARSEN PLEADS NO CONTEST

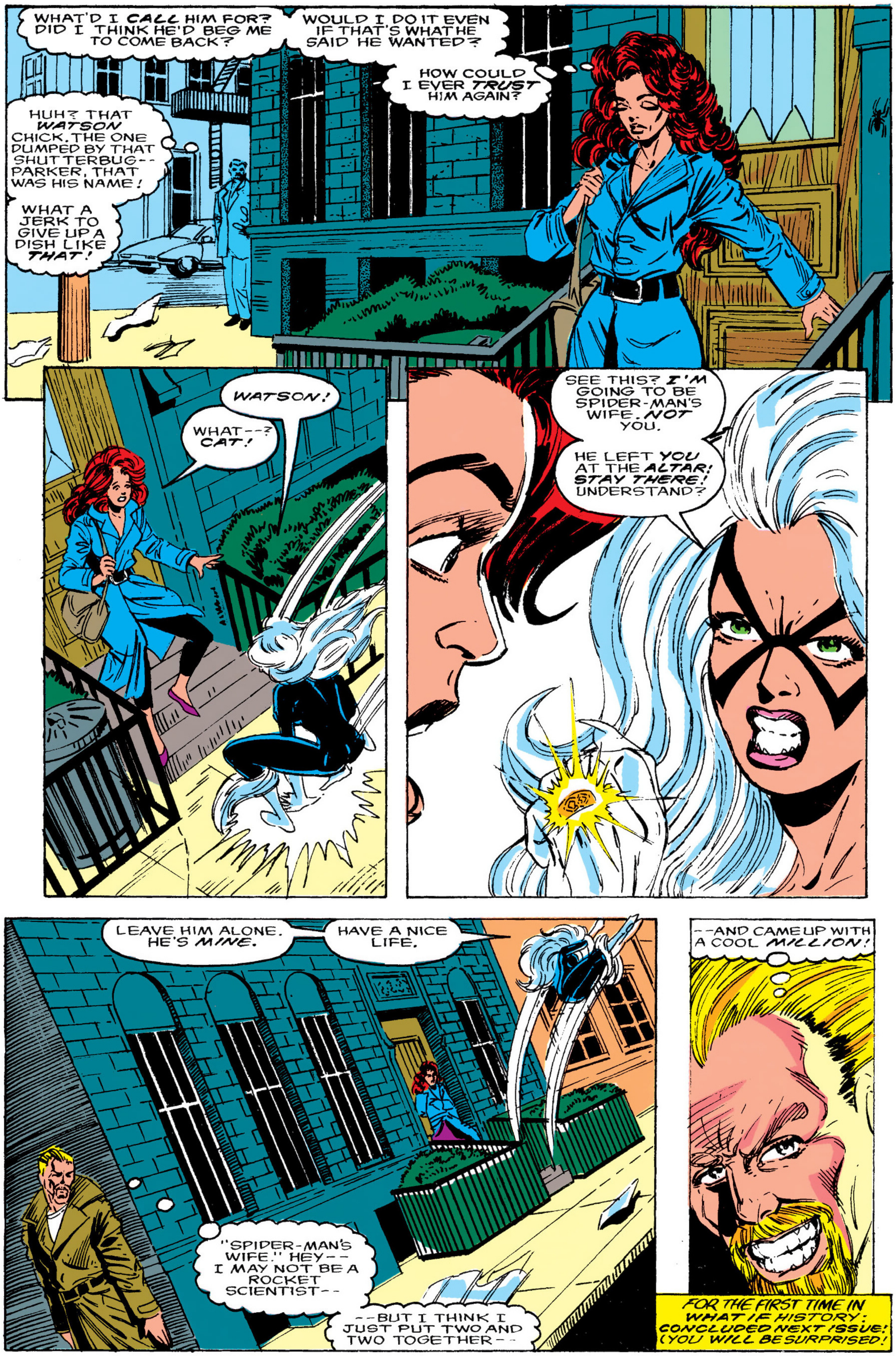
by Jack Smith




HI, HON. ANY CALLS?
WRONG NUMBER.
GOOD. I DIDN'T WANT TO BE DISTURBED--
--WHEN I GIVE YOU THIS.
SPIDER--! SPIDER!
I OWE YOU MY LIFE-- IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE, CAT.
IS IT ME HE WANTS--OR IS HE JUST ON THE REBOUND?
DOESN'T MATTER.
I LOST HIM ONCE. I CAN'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN.
IT'S TIME FOR US TO BOTH GROW UP.
MARRY ME.
YES, PETER.
YES!
LET'S GO CELEBRATE! WE'LL DO THE TOWN!
SOUNDS LIKE A DREAM, LOVER. BUT FIRST--
--I'VE GOT A QUICK ERRAND TO RUN!
CAT! LOOK OUT BEFORE YOU--
--GO THROUGH THE SKYLIGHT.
SPIDER-SENSE DIDN'T GO OFF-- SO NO ONE'LL SEE HER LEAVING FROM PETER PARKER'S APARTMENT.
THIS TIME.


WHAT'D I CALL HIM FOR? DID I THINK HE'D BEG ME TO COME BACK?
WOULD I DO IT EVEN IF THAT'S WHAT HE SAID HE WANTED?
HOW COULD I EVER TRUST HIM AGAIN?
HUH? THAT WATSON CHICK, THE ONE DUMPED BY THAT SHUTTERBUG-- PARKER, THAT WAS HIS NAME!
WHAT A JERK TO GIVE UP A DISH LIKE THAT!
WATSON!
WHAT--? CAT!
SEE THIS? I'M GOING TO BE SPIDER-MAN'S WIFE. NOT YOU.
HE LEFT YOU AT THE ALTAR! STAY THERE! UNDERSTAND?
LEAVE HIM ALONE. HE'S MINE.
HAVE A NICE LIFE.
"SPIDER-MAN'S WIFE." HEY-- I MAY NOT BE A ROCKET SCIENTIST--
--BUT I THINK I JUST PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER--
--AND CAME UP WITH A COOL MILLION!
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN WHAT IF HISTORY: CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE! (YOU WILL BE SURPRISED!